

## **Succeeding as a hospital doctor; the experts share their secrets (2nd ed) Roger Kirby & Tony Mundy**

### **Introduction**

Success is always sought but can often be elusive. We always try and keep up to date and try to do the things that are asked of us, but often it can be helpful to have a guiding hand to lead the way. The authors of this book state that 'the road to success is always under construction. The aim of this book is to help you build your own road.' To this end I think they have achieved their aim admirably and have created a book packed with practical hints and personal tips on how to succeed in medicine. The book sets out to be a practical guide to everyday life as a consultant and I think it is perfectly pitched at a specialist or speciality registrar looking to make the transition to consultancy.

### **Outline of content**

The book weighs in at 217 pages, but is very well-written and easily readable; no problems getting through it in an evening or so. It expands on the traditional 'management' topics of finance and medicolegal issues and is divided into several topics:

Training for success – emphasises the importance of being pro-active in ones training and developing and sticking to a personal learning portfolio. It also provides some useful information about passing the final fellowship exams and the consultant interview.

Research – identifies the profile of a good supervisor as well as information about grant applications and writing up. This section is a good overview, albeit fairly brief and it is likely that any senior trainee or consultant with serious research intentions will seek further information elsewhere.

Making your mark in the NHS - work life balance is often an area that can be neglected; this book reiterates the importance of having interests outside of the NHS. As well as leisure time, there are useful tips about striving for continued success, managing time and finding a clinical focus as well as information about the characteristics of good teams and leaders. This chapter will be invaluable for those starting out and looking to find their feet as consultants.

Making your name in private practice - this is an area that not all consultants will be involved in but for those that are keen to provide their skills and services in the private sector the information contained here will be helpful - there are sections on business models; chambers, co-operatives and solo practice, as well as advice on dealing with insurance companies, keeping accounts and arranging out of hours cover with colleagues.

Effective communication - clear, concise communication is essential in all aspects of medicine but unfortunately the sole cause of the majority of complaints against doctors is poor communication. This chapter exhorts us to be emphatic, but in a friendly and sympathetic way and provides advice about talking to patients and breaking bad news, as well as covering topics such as communicating with colleagues and the media. The chapter finishes with advice about meetings, academic sessions and working with public relations companies, aspects of communication that not all of us may have had experience of.

Crisis management - 'Smooth seas do not make skilled sailors' is an African proverb that the authors use as an introductory quote. There is an acknowledgement that mistakes and errors will occur but we succeed by reflecting and learning from them. Personal causes of medical mistakes include a defensive attitude in the face of criticism, poor collaboration, lack of skills,

poor motivation and bad teamwork. Organisational factors include cliques and factions, lack of coherent strategy, poor communication and inadequate infrastructure. This chapter gives guidance on circumventing these issues.

Clinical governance and self-regulation - the seven pillars of clinical governance are well-known and second nature to most clinicians. The book does expand upon the £500m cost of medical negligence claims and introduces the Heinrich ratio of minor to major injuries. For every major event, one would expect to see 30 minor events but approximately 300 near misses that don't result in injury and these constitute important 'free lessons' that allow us to learn and avoid more serious major events.

Management issues - again a brief overview of topics that most clinicians will likely already be familiar with.

Finance - an interesting section that looks at personal finance, mortgages etc as well as some of the intricacies of bookkeeping and running a private practice albeit with the proviso that all decisions should be made with the advice of an IFA and past performance is no guarantee of future success yada, yada, yada.

Hiring and firing - The NHS is one of the world's largest employers and as such has robust employment rights such as maternity and paternity leave that for many of us we take for granted. As a potential employer of maybe less than ten employees the hospital doctor may enter a quagmire of HR problems. This chapter sets out the principal employment rights of workers and offers advice to be a good employer

Medicolegal matters - consent, data protection, confidentiality, complaints and clinical negligence are covered in this chapter as well as information about the coroner's court and revalidation although this section is sparse and dated

The NHS: present and future - again, given that the book was written in 2002 this section now looks dated with no mention, obviously, of the Darzi review or Lansley's Health & Social Care Bill. The information provided on the NHS plan is accurate and useful but a new edition would be much more up to date.

## **Highlights**

The book ends with a colour plate section of tips and pearls from leaders in medicine such as (a much younger-looking) Liam Donaldson, Graeme Catto, David Weatherall, Peter Morris and John Temple. These views are personal pen portraits of success eg: humility, hard work, humanism, humour, honesty, hours and honour but again given the date of publication of the book many of these titans are now retired and have been replaced with new medical heroes.

## **Reservations**

None really, this is an excellent, readable book - it is now nearly a decade old and starting to look a little dated, but I'm sure the 3rd edition ([http://www.amazon.co.uk/Succeeding-Hospital-Doctor-Experts-Secrets/dp/1903734797/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1311346114&sr=1-4](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Succeeding-Hospital-Doctor-Experts-Secrets/dp/1903734797/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1311346114&sr=1-4)) would be a better buy

## **Summary**

A great little book definitely worth a read and a useful addition to the career's library.

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